



# USAID | GUATEMALA

DEL PUEBLO DE LOS ESTADOS  
UNIDOS DE AMÉRICA

## **First Person: Selvin Boanerges Garcia Velasquez**

### **Background**

Selvin Garcia is the Mayor of the Municipality of Pachulum in the southeastern corner of the Department of Quiché, Guatemala. The Quiché Department was one of the most heavily affected areas during the armed conflict that ended with the Peace Accords in 1996. The Municipality of Pachulum has a mostly ladino population of about 11,000 persons, but it is estimated that another 3,000 live abroad, many in the State of New Jersey, USA.

Mayor Garcia's has won national and international recognition for dynamic leadership of both his municipality and the municipal movement. With assistance from the USAID Decentralization and Local Governance Program, he has introduced modern management tools (SIAF-Muni for integrated financial management and Guatecompras for transparent procurement) and methods for increased citizen participation. Mayor Garcia has modernized communications with constituencies using interactive radio to reach out to far flung communities and an internet site ([www.pachalum.com](http://www.pachalum.com)) to maintain contact with his constituents that have emigrated north.

Garcia is keenly interested in local level education reforms and uses municipal funds to subsidize educational infrastructure, books, and even paying teacher salaries with municipal funds—a uniquely innovative approach in Guatemala. Under his leadership, Pachalum has built and opened a technical institute that is attended by students of surrounding municipalities who otherwise would not have access to secondary school.

One of Pachalum's claim to fame is that it is one of the safest municipalities in Guatemala, mostly free of juvenile gangs that are growing like a cancer in many other municipalities.

Mayor Garcia led the effort to organize a municipal "*mancomunidad*" that consists of six adjacent municipalities that work to coordinate development plans. Mayor Garcia is keenly interested in education reforms at local level.

USAID supports local government and education as fundamental to both democracy and economic development. Municipalities that invest in education, roads, and form partnerships with the private sector can take full advantage of new opportunities provided by the CAFTA-DR trade agreement. Leaders like Mayor Garcia are taking full advantage and leveraging foreign assistance to propel their constituencies forward to a better life with more equal opportunities for all citizens.

## **THE USAID DECENTRALIZATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAM**

The USAID Decentralization and Local Government Program (DLGP) is a \$5 million, 5 year effort that promotes 1) municipal governance and transparency, 2) citizen participation, and 3) policy reforms to increase municipal financial autonomy and accountability. It works through 5 clusters of municipalities, known as mancomunidades, located in Quiche, Chiquimula, and in San Marcos (the latter in response to Hurricane Stan rehabilitation efforts). The DGLP also assists the Municipality of Coban. On policy issues, it works closely with the Presidential Sub-Secretariat for Decentralization, the Ministry of Finance, and the National Institute of Municipal Development (INFOM), the National Association of Municipalities (ANAM), and the Association of Indigenous Mayors (AGAI).

To promote good governance, DGLP trains and supports municipalities in the use of integrated financial management (SIAF-Muni), transparent procurement (Guatecompras), internal auditing, and rendition of accounts. Citizen participation is promoted through social auditing, participatory planning and budgeting, and electoral participation. DGLP is expected to play an important role in encouraging citizen participation and debate in the 2007 elections.

Policy reforms target municipal finance. DGLP has drafted a new Municipal Tax Code that if enacted, will substantially bolster municipal revenues. It is working with the Ministry of Finance and ANAM on new policies for debt and transfers.

DGLP recently assumed responsibility for assisting San Marcos municipalities affected by Hurricane Stan. It provides direct assistance to 11 municipalities for planning and implementing GOG-funded rehabilitation programs, assists the Departmental Rehabilitation Council and the Mancomunidad ADIMAN, and is helping draft a Disaster Mitigation Plan for the area.

The DGLP is implemented through a contract with DevTech Systems Inc. The USAID Technical Officer is Alfredo Calderon. The Chief of Party is Carlos Loria.